

# Wichita Alarm Program

## Alarm Users Information Packet



## **False Alarm Statistics:**

Over 40,000 residential and commercial alarm systems in Wichita

From August 1, 2009, through July 31, 2010:

False burglary alarms: **16,438**

False fire alarms: **1,602**

From August 1, 2010, through July 31, 2011:

False burglary alarms: **15,234**

False fire alarms: **1,514**

7.3% reduction in false burglary alarms from previous year

5.5% reduction in false fire alarms from previous year

Costs of false alarms:

Each burglary alarm: \$60

Each fire alarm: \$1500

Finance Department estimates \$3 million spent annually to respond to false alarms

Current reduction in false alarms results in approximately \$200,000 decrease in spending

## **What is a false alarm?**

A false alarm is defined as the activation of an alarm system in the City resulting in an urgent response by law enforcement, fire, or emergency services when a situation requiring an urgent response does not, in fact, exist at the time of the activation of the alarm, or an alarm system designed to be used to report a robbery or holdup, when used for any other purpose.

## **How are false alarms caused, and what can be done to prevent them from happening?**

### **Most common causes:**

- Equipment quality
- Installation quality
- Misapplication of equipment
- Sensor sensitivity levels
- Weather
- User inexperience
- User error



### **Prevention tips:**

- Understand how your system works.
- Lock and secure all doors and windows.
- Know your password.
- Train anyone with access to the home or business how to use the keypad.
- Inspect your system:
  - Monthly visual inspection.
  - Annual alarm company inspection.
- Communicate with your alarm company:
  - Keep contact numbers updated.

Advise them when doing construction.

Call them if you suspect a problem with your system.

Ensure they know your expectations for when to call 911.

### **What do I need to know about the Wichita Alarm Ordinance?**

All alarm systems inside the jurisdiction boundaries of the Wichita Police and Fire Departments must be registered.

Alarm company is required to complete initial registration process for each customer and pay the initial \$25.00 permit fee for the customer's first year.

Alarm user is required to re-register the permit annually for \$25.00.

Users whose permit expires after September 1, 2011, and have been false alarm free during the previous registration period will qualify for a waiver of the annual \$25.00 permit fee.

\$150.00 civil penalties will be assessed to customers who have failed to pay the annual permit fee and have alarm activations on an expired permit.

False alarm fees are based on cancellation time, not Police or Fire response.

Alarm must be cancelled by the alarm company to 911 within 4 minutes.

If not cancelled in 4 minutes, a false alarm will be charged, regardless of whether or not Police or Fire personnel arrive onscene.

First false alarm each permit year is free.

False alarm fees are assessed starting with the 2<sup>nd</sup> alarm activation.

Burglary alarms and Fire alarms have independent fee schedules that increase on a graduated scale.

Users are allowed to complete online Alarm School to remove 1 false alarm fee per permit year. This will not waive the alarm, or remove any late fees.

All disputes regarding a false alarm must be done in writing within 30 days of the original invoice date.

\$10.00 appeal fee per alarm activation being appealed.

Appeals will not be processed via phone or without the appropriate appeal fee(s).

Full appeal guidelines available, and can be faxed, mailed, or emailed upon request.

Mail appeals to:

Alarm Administrator

455 N Main – 4<sup>th</sup> Floor

Wichita, KS 67202

### **What should I expect from my alarm company?**

Every alarm company is different. Many companies offer products and services similar to other companies. This can make it difficult to be confident that you have chosen the alarm company that will meet your needs the best. The City of Wichita cannot encourage or discourage a customer from choosing one alarm company over another. Nor can the City recommend a particular company or their products and services. It is up to you, the consumer, to research your options if you are considering purchasing an alarm system or switching alarm companies. Characteristics of a good alarm company include:

Proper licenses.

Providing a written instruction manual.

Provide clear training at the time of installation.

Available to answer follow-up questions.

Prompt and effective repairs to the system.

Alarm verification by telephone call, video, or audio built into the system.

Available to update account information.

Ability to identify zones or sensors which have been activated.

Available to receive calls and perform repairs after normal business hours.